

# ALIEN ANIMATION

Sheila Graber looks at the work of two animators who specialise in Science Fiction work



Examples of the work of comic artist Al Davison. Notice how effective such work would be in the development of a storyboard screenplay.



Angus McKie lives in the twilight zone where reality and fantasy overlap: a world where the dead ordinary, the living dead, and deadlines are all just part of the job. ... yes Angus McKie is a creature of the night: he is a COMIC ARTIST.

The story-line for his current production, sums up with perception, wit and great technical skill the whole 'Science Fiction' genre, whether it be in books, comic strips or films.





## THE STORY SO FAR...

Slogging steadily over his normal every-day (and night) desk, in his small-every-day bed-sit, the comic book artist turns out a stream of exciting, entertaining, mind-and-establishment blowing anarchy. On the rare occasion that he looks up from the job in hand he sees the world outside is awash with his own creations. It seems that an avid underground readership has taken his books as a pattern for action. Eager shouts of 'The Revolution has taken over' greet him wherever he goes. A comment from our now 'Super-Hero': "Gee... I hope no one gets hurt!"

Creator of the story *So Beautiful, So Dangerous* which was later to be made into what is certainly the most visually effective sequence in the animated feature *Heavy Metal*, Angus is a master of timing in both the filmic and graphic sense. Take a look at the pages illustrated here, and you'll see what I mean. He combines the punch of *Alien*, the technology of *Star Wars* and the bleak power of 1984 with a biting satire and warm humanity that add a whole new dimension to the already four-dimensional world of Science Fiction.

More bizarre storyboarding from Al Davison

## COMIC BOOK TRADITION

Al Davison is another artist who skilfully weaves together the strands of comic book tradition, filmic thinking and personal philosophy into strikingly effective layouts, any of which would make a perfect storyboard for a film.

Indeed he and Angus are contemporary proof of the very strong link between all these media. Much Science Fiction began in comic book form, and when it became a popular film subject many producers, Spielberg amongst them, employed 'comic-book' artists to provide the screenplay (in visual story-board form) as a scene-by-scene guide for their films.

Al works in many styles, exploring themes from Bruce Lee to Aubrey Beardsley. These drawings from one story show far more graphically than any words from me how storyboarding works.

## TWILIGHT ZONE

The theme once more cuts across the 'twilight zone' between dreams and reality, bringing in the artistic and historically repetitive theme of 'avenging furies'. Al creates just the right atmosphere for dark tale, with not only a splendid use of character, tone and texture, but also a powerful 'filmic' use of screen-space, close-up, wide-angle, cutting and crash zoom. Like all good fantasy Al's ideas are firmly rooted in the reality of his own experience, not only that of films, books and other art-works, but also of his own sensitive and often poetic response to the world about him.

This, I think, is where the strength of any really innovative or effective 'fantasy' begins... from first hand experience and knowledge transmuted through the grid of your chosen medium in such a way that the 'audience' feels what you feel and lives



# COMIC ARTIST

I AM A CREATURE OF THE NIGHT... I AM A

THE WORLD GOES ROUND...

The work of Angus McKie. He provided an episode for the full-length cartoon *Heavy Metal*

your fantasy with you.

Fantasy which simply feeds on other fantasy can quickly lead to shallow repetitive work. For example: for me the two Robots Hewey & Dewey in *Silent Running* were first-off archetypes: their child-like lumbering walk and alert communicative bleeps really passed on many levels of feeling between themselves, their human Boss and the viewer. Two rather better known Robots in *Star Wars* copied this dual relationship to a more mercenary but less emotive effect. Now we have thousands of bumbling bleeping characters — who fail to move us at all.

The art of such original thinkers as Angus and Al **does** move us to think again on the world about us... is it as predictable and unchanging as it seems, or are there 'More things in Heaven and Earth than are dreamed of in our Philosophy?' Ask a creature of the night — consult a Comic Artist. ■

